



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

*Board Of Physical Therapy Examiners*

March 22, 2010

To Whom It May Concern:

At its meeting of March 16, 2010, the Maryland Board of Physical Therapy Examiners discussed the issue of the motto "pain=harm=abuse". The Board fully concurs with the APTA Board of Directors views which are as follows:

**"Failing to acknowledge and modify interventions based on a patient's tolerance to pain is cruel, and this behavior should be reprimanded. As physical therapists we inform our patients about the risks (e.g. pain) associated with our interventions and receive consent before proceeding. It is our responsibility to educate our patients about what to expect from physical therapy. Pain is definitely something that some patients may experience during and/or after treatment. We should explain why they may experience this symptom, and how to manage it when we are not around. We should be educating them on how to distinguish harmful pain from expected discomfort. Hopefully, this will help prevent patients from accusing their physical therapist of being insensitive (or possibly abusive).**

**At some facilities PTs are required to and record patients pain upon arrival and leaving the session. If a patient has increased pain at the end of the session, the physical therapist must make sure that documentation indicates how it is addressed – for instance – that I will modify next treatment or contact the MD if really severe – or that I added modalities to help the pain. As PTs we need to be really aware of the pain our patients experience and be sure to address it. Tell patients that no pain no gain does not apply and that real pain increases indicate tissue irritation and generally is not helpful. "**

The Maryland Board of Physical Therapy Examiners hopes this is helpful in practices where the motto "pain=harm=abuse" is used.

Sincerely,

Ann E. Tyminski  
Executive Director